



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Swim advisories to continue at specific sites in Commonwealth *Public urged to avoid unhealthy waters*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 25, 2012) -- With the approach of Memorial Day and the summer travel season, recreational swimming will play a large part in summer fun for many Kentuckians. To make this summer a healthy swimming experience, state water quality and public health officials are urging swimmers to adopt healthy swimming behaviors that will help prevent the spread of waterborne illness.

State officials are also reissuing swimming advisories for specific areas of Kentucky waterways.

"This information is provided to our citizens to help them make the best public health decisions about how and where they swim," said Dr. Steve Davis, acting commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH). His department works with the Kentucky Division of Water in the Energy and Environment Cabinet to issue Kentucky's swimming advisories.

Kathy Fowler, acting director of DPH's Division of Public Health Protection and Safety, said safe swimming habits also are needed in public pools.

"Thousands of Kentuckians visit our public pools throughout the season, there are some simple recommendations to follow will help ensure the water will remain clean and our citizens healthy," Fowler said.

1. Do not swallow pool water or get pool water in your mouth.
2. Shower before swimming and have your children shower.
3. Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
4. Take children on bathroom breaks or change diapers often.
5. Change children's diapers in a bathroom, not at poolside.

6. Do not swim when you have diarrhea.

To promote healthy swimming habits and prevent recreational water illness, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has proclaimed May 21-27 as National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week. Waterborne illnesses are caused by microorganisms such as *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *E. coli* and *Shigella* and are spread by accidentally swallowing water contaminated with fecal matter. Chlorine kills bacteria, but disinfection takes time.

Swimmers should also heed swimming advisories issued to protect the public from contaminants in some areas of Kentucky waterways. The Division of Water and the Division of Public Health Protection and Safety agree that advisories issued last summer will remain in effect due to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria.

People should avoid swimming and other recreational contact with waters in the areas specified below, where bacteria that occurs in human and animal waste indicates the presence of untreated or inadequately treated sewage.

Upper Cumberland River

- The Cumberland River from Fourmile Bridge (Highway 2014) to Pineville at the Highway 66 Bridge and from Wallins Creek Bridge (Highway 219) to Harlan
- Martins Fork from Harlan to the Cawood Water Plant
- All of Catron Creek, all of Clover Fork and all of Straight Creek
- Poor Fork from Harlan to Looney Creek
- Looney Creek from the mouth to Lynch Water Plant Bridge

Illegal straight pipe discharges, failing septic systems and bypasses from sewage collection systems contribute to water quality problems in these areas.

Kentucky River

- North Fork of the Kentucky River upstream of Chavies

Numerous illegal straight pipe discharges of sewage contribute to water quality problems along this section of the river. However, water quality has continued to improve and is approaching an acceptable level for swimming in some stretches of the river.

Licking River

- Banklick Creek to its confluence with the Ohio River

This swimming advisory includes all of Banklick Creek and Three Mile Creek. High fecal coliform pollution in this area is caused by combined sewer overflows and sanitary sewer overflows.

Residential and agricultural areas

The agencies also recommend against swimming or other full-body contact with surface waters immediately following heavy rain, especially in dense residential, urban and livestock production areas. This recommendation is due to the relationship between flooding and an increased potential for exposure to pollution from urban nonpoint source pollution, bypasses from sewage collection systems, combined sewer overflows and pollution from livestock waste.

New advisories will be issued if there are indications that any portions of the streams listed can be removed or any non-listed streams need to be added. The Cabinet for Health and Family Services and local health department environmental health staff make sure all new septic system installations are installed properly, reducing bacterial pollution from these possible sources. Division of Water staff and wastewater plant operators monitor wastewater treatment plant compliance and ensure sewer overflows are minimized. Both agencies routinely address straight pipe issues and are gradually reducing the number of these discharges across the state.

For additional information about the safety of Kentucky's rivers and streams for swimming, contact John Brumley at 502-564-3410 or john.brumley@ky.gov.

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